religion in today's school

A symposium of the French and German
Educational delegations on pupils' problems

U.S. Liaison Committee of the German
Council of Education

table of contents

Eng ed
Part I of "Vows at impasse"

		page
Foreword		5
Introduction: Should Religion Have a Place in the School Curriculum?		7
I.	**Background of the Discussion**	11
1.	The Theological Approach	14
2.	The Secular Approach	19
3.	The Pragmatic Approach	23
II.	**Towards an Educational Approach**	27
1.	An Integral Element of the Educational Programme	30
2.	Four Conditions of Implementation	35
3.	Objectives and Evaluation	43
III.	**Beyond Paralysing Dilemmas**	51
1.	Is Any Consensus Possible?	54
2.	The Educational Viewpoint and Confessional Schools	59
Conclusion: A New Outlook		64
References		66

foreword

A particular characteristic of the school system of Quebec is its full acceptance of religion. However diverse may be the viewpoints and options available in religious matters, this positive attitude provides an opportunity to educate man in his totality. This is an asset, but it is also a challenge. Where the notice is made to include religion in a school programme, the reasons for such a decision should be clearly understood. Moreover, the role that religion can and should play in the school should be defined realistically. Finally, in choosing orientations and methods, it is imperative to transcend vague generalities and clichés.

This study is designed to answer those needs. It does not claim to offer definitive stands. But on a subject where much hesitation, doubt, and perplexity exist, it suggests an orientation that may produce the unity of purpose that is needed in a school. It aims at discerning right directions and avoiding paths that lead only to dead ends.

In offering this report to the public, the Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education seeks to stimulate reflection and to foster a better understanding of what Christian Education should be in our contemporary school system.

André Naud, Chairman

Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education

102-00800/

Introduction

Should religion have a place in the school curriculum

1. Only a short while ago, such a question would have seemed preposterous. It is well known that the whole history of education in Quebec has been closely linked to the presence and the activity of the Church. Quebec's school system as it exists today took shape very gradually through private initiatives and local structures, particularly the school commissions, which were established by legislation in 1845 and 1846. Thus the parishes, the clergy, and the religious communities all had major roles in setting policy and providing support for education. We need only cite the fact that prior to 1908, the Provincial Government's annual expenditure for each child enrolled in elementary classes was less than 50 cents. (1) During the same period, the classical colleges, which were owned by dioceses and religious communities, were practically the only institutions providing secondary education. In this context then, it was only natural that religious training had a predominant role — a role which we would now consider overpowering. Yet this was not the result of any encroachment. Not only in Quebec, but in England and in other countries of the Western world, «education was a creature of religion.» (2)

2. In our day the place of religion in schools is a keenly debated question. In the early sixties, this was, at times, a matter of external pressures or ideological conflicts. But that is less common today and the question now arises spontaneously from within, as a result of structural changes in both the schools and the Churches. Indeed, a whole series of basic questions is now being raised. Shouldn't religious education be left to the family and to the Church? Does religion still mean anything to young people? What happens to religious education in a society characterized by religious pluralism? Do we have enough teachers to maintain confessional schools? Isn't the very concept of religious education an anachronism? All these questions reveal what a tremendous change has taken place during the past few decades.

3. On the one hand, the status of the schools has changed, as they have increasingly acquired the characteristics of autonomous and complex institutions with their own internal coherence and logic. Today's schools are seen primarily as social instruments of personal and collective development. On the other hand, the status of religion in Quebec has also changed considerably. Judgments about the advisability and the importance of religious education are inevitably affected by the fact that there is no longer unanimity of religious attitudes. We encounter a full range of reactions to the subject: to some, it seems essential or very important; to others, it is of marginal or private interest; still others reject it as obsolete or even utterly alien. All these contrasting opinions, while rarely a cause of violent debate, nevertheless prove how controversial the subject has become.

4. We must begin by making it clear that this question of religious education is not an abstract or theoretical matter in Quebec. It belongs to the whole texture of everyday life, because religious education here is first and foremost an actual fact, an important concrete reality. Regulations on religion in the school curriculum are issued by the Catholic Committee and the Protestant Committee of the Superior Council of Education. In elementary schools, a large majority of the 30,000 teachers must devote some two or three periods a week to religious instruction. On the secondary level, there are more than 3,000 teachers assigned to religious education, either exclusively or on a part-time basis. We must also add, for both levels together, more than 1,000 pastoral animators and counselors concerned with Christian education and religious instruction. Naturally, this whole system involves the usual burden of problems common to all educational structures — budget, timetables, recruitment, standards, directives, programmes, and so on. Those who deal with all these questions in their daily work run the risk of ultimately viewing religious education only from their own angle of vision, from their own little corner. Thus they may fail to see the overall picture. The same holds true for those who condemn the entire system as obsolete.

5. The aim of the present study is to review in a general way the question of religious education, especially its foundation. We shall strive to rise above attitudes of attack and defence that all too often are one-sided and vulnerable. We wish to determine whether religious education still has a worthwhile purpose in today's schools and what contribution it can make to the schools' programme as a whole. To do this, we first must untangle the various concepts now held concerning religious education. Experience shows that on this subject everyone does not speak the same language. Ideological positions are sometimes worlds apart.

6. It is noteworthy that of the two elements, "religion" and "education" in the expression "religious education", the first is frequently given predominance, so that it is taken for granted that the fate of religious education will be determined by the fate reserved for what each individual calls "religion". Depending upon whether a positive or negative value judgment is evoked by "religion", its role in the school is declared to be either essential or useless. We believe, however, that the word "education" is equally important when it comes to passing judgment on the place of religion in the school. The determining factor here is one's general concept of education. Those who view it in a narrowly pragmatic way, as a mere process of acquiring knowledge for the purpose of earning a living, may consider religious instruction as unimportant. But those who view education as growth of the total person in order that he or she "may learn to be", may reach quite a different conclusion concerning the teaching of religion. Our present study is based on a firm choice in favour of this second concept of education. To support it, we cite the definition given in the Faure report of UNESCO:

> "Education from now on can no longer be defined in relation to a fixed content which has to be assimilated, but must be conceived of as a process in the human being, who thereby learns to express himself, to communicate and to question the world, through his various experiences, and increasingly — all the time — to fulfil himself." (3)

7. In examining this question, we are faced with two basic alternatives. On the one hand, the schools may retain religion in order to escape controversy and to avoid displeasing parents. In this case, religion will be treated like a poor relative in a household. It will be a subject of only marginal interest, embarrassing and controversial. On the other hand, the schools may choose to recognize religion as an integral part of the educational programme, a valid field of study, a meaningful form of training. In this situation, religion is treated as a subject rooted in our whole cultural heritage, having its own value in the development of youth. Sooner or later the first direction may lead to a deadend, while the second is more likely to open the way to fuller human development.

part I

background of the discussion

Beyond the immediate and explicit motivation that dictates decisions concerning religious education in the school, there is always a vast background of implicit ideas and convictions that are rarely expressed. From this intellectual hinterland, like alluvial deposits, come many arguments or foregone conclusions that either enrich or impede a fruitful discussion.

We consider it worthwhile to begin our study by exploring these hidden motivations as the area where decisions originate. It is necessary to examine the various concepts of religious education. Without such preliminary work of clarification, it will not be useful or even possible to reach agreement on concrete plans.

1. the theological approach

8. The question of religious education in the school can be approached primarily on the basis of theological knowledge and the declarations of the Church magisterium. Traditionally this type of approach was used to explain the nature and purpose of Christian education and Catholic schools. For this reason, its principles and convictions are still profoundly anchored in the minds of many adults — parents, pastors, and administrators.

9. According to this theological viewpoint, Christian education is conceived first and foremost as based on revelation and as required, in particular, as a consequence of the sacrament of baptism.

> "Since every Christian has become a new creature by rebirth from water and the Holy Spirit, so that he may be called what he truly is, a child of God, he is entitled to a Christian education." (4)

Thus, in the eyes of faith the concept of education refers not only to the process of human maturation, but also includes man's supernatural destiny. The Vatican II Declaration quoted above also states:

> "A true education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal, and simultaneously with respect to the good of those societies of which, as a man, he is a member and in whose responsibilities, as an adult, he will share." (5)

For those holding this concept, to educate anyone means not only to develop a mature and fulfilled personality, but also (as part of the same process without any possible separation of the two objectives) to make him a genuine Christian. We are confronted here with a theological definition of education. By comparison, all other concepts will inevitably be judged inadequate or incomplete.

10. Here are the major principles that are derived from this concept of education and that have been constantly reiterated in official Church documents:

- The influence of the home is primary and fundamental. Consequently, parents have a serious duty to educate their children in a Christian way.

- Parents also have a fundamental and inalienable right to provide their children with an education that conforms with their religious convictions.

- Among the various means of education, the school is still a major instrument of training and apprenticeship, providing a kind of prolongation of the home environment.

• The Church lays claim to a twofold presence in the field of education — on the one hand, by setting up Catholic schools; on the other hand, by the witness of Christians serving in non-Catholic schools.

11. It can be stated that in the traditional thought of the Church, the **preferred way** to provide Christian education for the younger generation is by means of Catholic schools. But what is meant by the expression "Catholic schools"? Such schools seem to have four main characteristics:

1) Human education and Christian education are thought of as one single process, so that the whole of the students' learning and life experience comes gradually under the influence of the faith.

2) An environment and an atmosphere is created where the Gospel spirit of liberty and charity prevails.

3) Special attention is paid to catechetical, liturgical, and apostolic training in order to help the students to become believers, participants, and witnesses.

4) There is an educational community based on shared religious convictions.

12. However, the overwhelming majority of the world's school population is in the second type of situation, where the Church is present in non-Catholic schools through the witness of Christian teachers and students. Throughout the world, less than one student in ten receives an education in Catholic schools. (6) The Council Declaration states, concerning this:

> "The Church is keenly aware of her very grave obligation to give zealous attention to the moral and religious education of all her children. To those large numbers of them who are being trained in schools which are not Catholic, she needs to be present with her special affection and helpfulness. This she does through the living witness of those who teach and direct such students, through the apostolic activity of their school-mates, but most of all through the services of the priests and laymen who transmit to them the doctrine of salvation." (7)

Merits and deficiencies

13. This doctrine of the Church concerning schools has a universal bearing and is intended for Christians of the entire world. It sets up an ideal, presents guidelines and general principles to direct those who must find acceptable applications suited to their own concrete political, cultural, and social milieux. It cannot, therefore, take account of particular conditions prevailing in each continent and each country. While this doctrine

is enlightening and useful, by itself it is not sufficient to describe and regulate the existential situation of education in Quebec. Any attempt to deduce a definitive plan for Christian schools in our country from the official declarations and documents of the Church is bound to end in failure. The theologian, Raymond Laflamme, in an article where he makes the distinction between what is permanent and what is wanting in Catholic doctrice on schools, states: "Nothing is more annoying than to find people using general principles as a blueprint for concrete institutional solutions. Certain thinkers try to settle practical problems as if they were theorems in geometry: this is completely foreign to the study of ethics. We must recognize that the Church's doctrine on education has elements of certainty and permanence, but in other ways it is inadequate. This means that when the problem of education arises in a particular society, it cannot be handled or settled solely on the basis of universal principles". (8)

14. We must note first of all that the concept of the Catholic school as defined in the official documents of the Magisterium does not coincide fully with the educational system of Quebec. The underlying model of "Catholic school" to which these documents refer is that particular type of educational institution that belongs to a Christian community or a diocese — like the parochial schools in the United States or the "écoles libres" in France. This pattern cannot, without alterations, fit the situation in Quebec, at least not in the public schools which are not owned by the Churches but by school commissions which are, in turn, public organizations set up to provide universal education. It is true that by law these school commissions are established "for Catholics" or "for Protestants", but it is specified in Article 49 of the Public Education Act that they are required to accept students other than Catholics or Protestants whose parents reside in the territory served. This first characteristic of the Quebec situation is of capital importance. Because of this particular feature of Quebec schools — the fact that they are both religious and open to all-there arises the need for a special definition of the Catholic school in this milieu. The definition must take into account local citizenship.

15. In seeking this Quebec definition of the Catholic school, other equally essential elements must be considered, in particular: the ethnic, cultural, social, and religious diversity that is increasingly characteristic of Quebec; the strong differences existing between the public and private sectors; the differences among the various levels of education — elementary, secondary, post-secondary. It immediately becomes apparent that the concept of the Catholic school cannot be understood in a single rigid way. There must be room for a variety of different formulae with features and characteristics differing greatly from one milieu to another, one level to another. We must emphasize also that our definition of Christian education should not be conceived exclusively in theological terms. Otherwise, it will not be grasped by those whose concerns in the schools is pedagogical and administrative.

16. Our stress on the need to define Christian education in terms of the Quebec school situation does not mean that we utterly reject the

ideal type of Catholic school as envisaged in the documents of Vatican II. It may be that this type of school is feasible in our private institutions or perhaps even in some public schools that are situated in places where the population is still homogeneous. While the model is not applicable to our whole school system, it is not without value. The confessional school model does not necessarily imply a "closed" or "ghetto" school, as is sometimes alleged by those who judge Catholic schools by sour memories of the schools of their own youth. We should beware of rejecting the system because of certain ways it has been abused – this would be to confuse the reality with the use made of it. It is still possible to envisage a school where all conditions favour a Christian educational programme, but where there is no yielding to bigotry, narrowmindedness or pedagogical mediocrity. Despite such risks, the denominational type of school brings forth values of its own and any attempt to include it can provide an element of variety and a healthy alternative within the school system as a whole.

17. During the past few years, certain groups have expressed a desire to return to a rigid definition of Catholic education in the public sector. Their demands, often rather clamorous, reveal their dissatisfaction with the schools as they are now and a kind of longing for the Christianity of times past. They remember the days when schools were less complex institutions, when they achieved more spontaneous harmony with the values of the families and the environment. However, except for the private schools mentioned above, a less dogmatic and more flexible definition of Catholic schools should be sought. The hands of the clock cannot be turned back.

18. We note also an attitude now common among Catholics who advocate that the Church's role in education should be primarily pastoral, should adopt methods and practices specific to the Church, and should depend upon the spontaneous witness of individual Christians and their organized groups. This current of thought reflects a new concept of the relationship between the Church and the world, a concept inspired by the pastoral ideas expressed in the Council Decree **Gaudium et Spes**. Those who adopt this trend of thought suggest that the Church's role in education should not be limited to confessional schools, but should also be found in non-confessional schools where an updated form of pastoral activity ought to be provided by Christians working there. This suggestion of an alternative type of Christian presence has awakened little response because the preferred institution, the Catholic school, has monopolized attention. We believe, however, that we should not overlook this new orientation, but should give thought to a trend that offers a variety of solutions to problems that are becoming increasingly complex. Where only one model is available, it eventually proves inadequate to deal with all the situations that arise. Or else it may become so flexible that it will end by losing its distinctive identity.

19. Another important point must be mentioned. The Church's doctrine makes a distinction between Christian education and Catholic schools, a distinction that is often somewhat disregarded. This causes

unfortunate confusion, so that discussions are likely to get bogged down in paths that lead nowhere. Christian education is as vast a field of activity as the mission of the Church itself which is duty-bound to educate in the faith people of every age and every milieu. This pastoral objective extends far beyond the period of school attendance, as limited to one place and one time of life — the school and school-age. Thus it is improper to use the expression "Christian Education" to refer only to the pastoral ministry that is performed in schools. But an even more serious risk of confusion exists — the danger of identifying a basic function of the Church, its educational mission, with one of the institutions where this function is carried out, namely, the Catholic school. We must avoid confusing ends and means. The essential principles of Christian education can be set up as the objectives of educational activity carried out in any type of school. The Catholic school is one way, (a preferred way, it is true) of attaining the objectives of Christian education in schools. But if we cling too closely to the notion of Catholic schools as the only vehicle of Christian education, as the one way to achieve the objectives, then we cut off all other choices and we are left facing the paralyzing alternatives of Catholic schools or neutral schools.

20. Within the context of the theological approach to religious education in the schools, we cannot neglect to mention the very recent movement favouring a charismatic type of religious training. Certain persons want religious instruction to become a prophetic proclamation of Jesus Christ "in time and out of time". They want the school to become the setting for mystical experience and radical conversion. It would be hasty and presumptuous to pass judgment immediately on new trends in the world of religion such as the charismatic movement among Catholics, Pentecostal groups, etc. Indeed these have already persisted and grown beyond the point foreseen by the casual predictions that passed them off as ephemeral spiritual phenomena. These groups present an unexpected trend, running counter to many current sociological conclusions about the decline of religion. But it would be rash indeed to proceed immediately to draw up programmes of religious education specifically patterned on these new forms of religious enthusiasm. Someone once remarked that "a man who marries the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower". (10)

2. the secular approach

21. This second approach deals with the question of religious education mainly from a sociological point of view. It is based on the two assertions that Quebec has now become a **secular** society and a **pluralistic** society. Secularism and pluralism! These are the two key concepts that for the past decade have been followed as the pattern for all investigation and analysis. The two words have been repeated so often that people tend to consider them as self-evident facts that must be accepted. These two phenomena have brought about a complete change in the background of religious education and have thus imposed a complete re-evaluation of Christian instruction in the schools. But it is a fact that these two words, however bright may be the halo bestowed on them, are still quite hazy in many minds and their exact meaning should be made clear.

22. In its strict sense the word "secularization" refers to the historical process whereby society and culture free themselves from the custody of religious authority. Thus we speak of the **secularization of social institutions and of cultural expression**. In this sense we are right in saying that during the post-war period Quebec has been secularized on every level: cooperatives, trade unions, hospitals, education, politics, etc. In itself, secularization is not at all a negative process, for it implies that civil society takes on responsibility for the temporal functions that belong to it by right. We may even say that it has certain beneficial effects, because it emphasizes the specific importance of each function by assigning a proper place to each individual and to each activity. This applies first of all to religion itself: once it is relieved of energy-consuming, substitutive tasks, it can focus attention on its primary duty to evangelize and sanctify.

23. However, the word "secularism" has acquired another meaning that is more extensive, but hazy. It often designates the personal experience of those believers who nowadays feel a certain weakening of their faith, an erosion of their sense of the supernatural, a lack of interest in religious matters — in short, a feeling that God is silent or absent. The world is void of magic and man is left alone to perform his secular tasks! Here we are speaking of the secularization of conscience, an inner mental process that supposedly foretells the end of all that is supernatural. Some people consider this decline of the religious conscience to be a self-evident fact, an inevitable feature of modern society. They boldly keep citing innumerable blatant instances of secularization, maintaining that religious attitudes belong to times long past, that young people have lost all interest in religion, that metaphysical questions about the meaning of life are no longer valid. In this way, reflections on secularization gradually lead to **secularism**, a new ideology of a self-contained world watching the fade-out of religious reality.

24. Pluralism is a kind of "twin phenomenon of secularism." (11) It refers to a situation where various views of the world coexist, where concepts of man and of life are displayed in a kind of free market. It is the

opposite of the monolithic situation where only one concept of the universe prevails. In a way, it is obvious that Quebec society is pluralistic, for a variety of interpretations of the world can be found there — Christian, spiritualist, materialist, hedonist, marxist, etc. Then too the splitting of society into various sub-societies or counter-cultures (the youth culture, hippies, ethnic groups, the poor, etc.) adds still more variety to the range of viewpoints. It is all this ethnic, cultural, social, economic, and religious diversity that is evoked by the word "pluralism". We can add to the list a new form of diversity that is now assuming major importance in Christian education: the internal diversity found in Churches, notably within the Catholic Church. We need only point out how much greater is the range of ways of belonging to the Church or professing the Christian faith since the Vatican II Council. Thus an **internal** pluralism within the Christian community is added to the **external** pluralism of society in general, all of which makes matters still more complex.

25. Based on these two concepts — secularism and pluralism — many different interpretations of the situation in Quebec can be made. We may conclude that there should be different types of schools and different types of religious education — non-denominational schools admitting anyone and eliminating all religious intent; schools non-sectarian in structure, but providing religious instruction, either on a uniform basis or with choice of alternatives; establishment of a twofold system of confessional and non-confessional schools, etc. At this point we are not concerned with details of the proposed types of schools because we are less interested here in the schools themselves than in the matrix from which the models emerge. We must examine and test the foundations, the **a priori** positions that support the plans proposed and the practical solutions. At this juncture it is important to test the evidence for the two phenomena called "secularism and pluralism" and to see whether they are really as solidly implanted as people tend to think.

Merits and deficiencies

26. There is no denying that secularism and pluralism are characteristic phenomena of Quebec society and that they have a predominant influence on the teaching of religion in schools. We may even state that many of the difficulties now confronting Christian education are the result of a belated realization of the impact these two trends were having on all milieux, including those considered shielded from change or "not that far-out yet". We must note, however, that secularism and pluralism are **processes**, that is, forms of development that occur by degrees, so that they are more or less prominent in different milieux and at different levels of society. They do not suddenly occur in a country, as if a bad storm hit every region simultaneously with the same intensity. That is how some people seem to view the matter when they state baldly that Quebec is now secularized, implying that the situation found on the campuses of Berkeley or Harvard is exactly the same as that at the University of Quebec in Montreal, the Lévis-Lauzon college, the secondary school in Mistassini or the elementary school in St. Isidore. Secularism and pluralism affect

all milieux, but with varying degrees of intensity and this must be taken into account. Even the customary distinction between urban and rural milieux is only partially valid in this case. there is a tendency to declare the latter "unaffected" by secularism and the former "hard hit", but this may well be inexact in both instances. There may be as much divergence in religious attitudes between St. Henri, Outremont, and Rosemount as there is between St. Jerome, Quebec city and Matane.

27. It would be more realistic and true to actual socio-religious conditions to take a less dogmatic and uniform view of the specific situation in many places. Otherwise, we risk falling into a curious return to one-sidedness. If we too hastily accept secularism and pluralism as self-evident conditions, we may be unable to see and grasp the real diversify of different milieux. Concerning the internal pluralism in the Catholic Church, for instance, patient analysis and reflection will be needed if we hope to understand the great differences in parents' expectations. It would be only too easy to disregard the whole matter by simply condemning the parents as insincere or inconsistent.

28. The same is true concerning the secularization of conscience. We must be on our guard against sociological analyses where so-called "progressive" groups set the norm to measure the entire population. Serious sociologists are beginning to cast doubts on certain stereotyped statements that are not supported by definitive evidence. Among these we can mention Andrew Greeley and Peter Berger. The latter has noted that "it would be extraordinarily naïve to expect the demise of the supernatural to be equally visible from all vantage points of our culture or to be experienced in the same way by all who have taken cognizance of it. There continue to be religious and theological milieux in which the crisis is, at the most, dimly sensed as an external threat in the distance. In other milieux the crisis is beginning to be felt, but is "still on its way". In yet other milieux the crisis is in full eruption as a threat inside the fabric of religious practice, faith, and thought. And in some places it is as if the believer or theologian were standing in a landscape of smouldering ruins". (12)

Andrew Greeley writes in the same vein, stating that, as a sociologist, he has always thought that a great many theological studies of secularism left much to be desired. He maintains that many theologians too hastily declare that man is non-religious by nature, though there is little sociological data to confirm such an idea. (13) Until our ideas of secularism and pluralism become less simplified and until we are sufficiently in touch with reality to examine the religious map of Québec in its full relief, we feel a need for parameters of analysis better adapted to its complexities. It would be a mistake to take secularism as the only basis for our thinking about religious education.

29. The secular approach rightly emphasizes that education in our day derives its motivations and goals from sources other than religion and that the tasks of civilization and culture differ from the tasks of evangelization. This distinction is not yet universally accepted. There are instances

where confusion still exists between the function of the school and the function of the Church or of the parish. Whatever form may be given to the teaching of religion in the school, it cannot survive without prior agreement to recognize and respect the complete autonomy of the educational institution concerning its own aims.

30. But while it is useful to distinguish functions, it may be harmful to subdivide them too much. The secular mentality tends to do this, following the example of industry. It is often suggested that religious activity in schools should come under a special pastoral department on a par with other special departments like hygiene, vocational guidance, sports, etc. Under this system the ideal would be to have a "department" for each type of activity, with many separate offices where the particular needs of each student could be attended to. This wide array of departments might seem ideal and when the system even includes a section for religion, it would seem to indicate praisewortny liberty and generosity. But in practice, it is far from certain that separate departments operating side by side really foster an integrated educational process. Something more than a juxtaposition of departments is needed to create an educational milieu. A poem is more than an alignment of words; man is more than the sum of his activities. When a school sets up a department of pastoral ministry and religious instruction, this can seem like a reserved area granted to the Churches, an annex where individual consciences can find satisfaction. This secular attitude, however, falls short of the view that religion should be an integral part of education.

3. the pragmatic approach

31. Unlike the first two approaches, which are based on theoretical principles, this third approach is characterized by a pragmatic attitude towards the question of religious education in the schools. Supporters of this approach start off by rejecting all general theories, proposing instead to make full use of available potential and to wait until particular problems arise before seeking the solutions best adapted to local conditions. They maintain that a definition of confessional schools can never be formulated in words or paragraphs, that the value of Christian activity in schools can never be fully measured by polls and surveys. For them the purpose of religious education in the school must be carried out in the midst of day-to-day activity that requires constant and alert leadership.

32. For those taking this approach, the success or failure of any situation depends first and foremost on the quality of the people involved and on the relevance of their activity. Of course, there are all kinds of limitations — timetables, office machines, transport, curricula, sheer inertia, ratios, budgets. But many possibilities remain open within present school structures as guaranteed by school law and the regulations of the Department of Education:

- in the area of organization and pedagogy as defined in the regulations of the Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education and as provided in the programmes concerned with instruction and with students' activities;

- especially with regard to personnel, since whenever worthwhile projects are planned, people can still be found who are ready and eager to carry them out. The main objective is to make full use of these many potentialities. This requires the presence in the school of active, lucid, critical leaders ready to pay careful attention to all aspects of school life, particularly any decisions that are likely to affect the overall orientation of the institution.

33. According to this approach, pluralism and secularism are not words that should provoke lengthy speculation, but are simple facts of life, which should be dealt with at the local level and in the way most appropriate to each milieu. For instance, in one particular place, it may be decided that because of special circumstances, Catholic children will be sent to Protestant schools where they will receive adequate training in the Catholic religion. And in this way, without any fuss or speeches, there comes into being what we may call a "multi-confessional" school, as a practical arrangement for that place. Elsewhere, in a pluralist suburb, parents may take the initiative of requesting a clear policy on religious education and insisting on the introduction of programmes specifically suited to the milieu's diversity. In a big inner-city school a penitential celebration that is well organized and directed may attract almost all the staff and students. Thus we see that the viewpoint of this approach is to try

to analyse particular basic situations and to be willing to handle problems one by one, not on a basis of general theories or dogmatic positions, but my using a combination of common sense, democratic spirit and pastoral acumen.

34. The pragmatic approach generally does not underestimate either theological principles, or current trends in a population where unanimity is vanishing, or the advantages and disadvantages of confessional structures. It strives to take all these factors into account in the search for workable solutions. This attitude is found among many administrators, parents, teachers, animators, who realize that they must accept today's pluralism, even though they continue to express their own convictions. The Dumont Commission adopted this viewpoint in stating:

> "Everyone should understand that the activity of Christians in schools takes place in a context of pluralism. It should, therefore, be accepted from the beginning that different groups are not necessarily in agreement as to goals and values. As these groups live together in the same city or the same village, there must be tireless efforts to find practical solutions that will enable all concerned to live together while accepting and respecting their differences. This policy is not so much a matter of general theory as a concrete adjustment to Quebec's diversity of milieux." (14)

Merits and deficiencies

35. There are definite advantages in this approach which is very flexible and allows for the expression of various regional and local differences. It provides acceptable solutions and adaptations that permit coexistence along with respect of individual differences. It also stresses the importance of taking a vigilant role in the decision-making process whenever the future of schools is at stake. From the short-term viewpoint, it seems the most reasonable and practical attitude.

36. But there are weak points in this approach which can be criticized under at least two headings. In the first place it fails to reveal its guidelines, or to explain on what educational or pastoral ideals it is based. Let no one be misled by the so-called "practical" solutions. Inevitably they are backed by theories that keep intruding even though these are not identified. The pragmatic approach risks becoming an unwieldy conglomerate that includes every tendency — ultra-conservative, traditional, progressive, secular, and so on. This is a source of ambiguity, since each individual can promote his own unavowed options. But sooner or later the options that determine decisions must be expressed and explained. Like it or not, a more or less general theoretical background exists here too and it exerts its influence on the concrete arrangements.

37. Our second objection is that this approach lacks foresight. Directed towards short-term objectives, it may be effective for a while, but on

a long-term basis, it may prove disastrous. Provisional and stopgap policies are at best fragile and self-limiting. What is to become of the schools in five or ten years? What place will there be for religious education then? Will confessional schools continue to exist in the future? What types of religious instruction should be recommended? These are all questions to which parents, teachers, and pastors would like to find answers. The pragmatic approach disregards these matters and refuses to define its fundamental principles and orientations. Those who prefer schools of a strictly confessional type condemn this policy which they see as a laissez-faire tendency producing a constant erosion of Christian education. Others see it as an opportunistic stand on the part of Church representatives, a strategy devised to prevent sudden reversals and to maintain the status quo.

38. We conclude, then, that the pragmatic approach is also inadequate. It needs to be rounded out by the addition of guidelines concerning the future role and place of religion in education. Even now, of course, many interesting possibilities and accomplishments exist. But we also note fluctuations, hesitations, and dilemmas that can be dealt with only by means of a newer and more coherent viewpoint.

part II

Theoretical and Conceptual Approach

The whole question of religious education in schools must be approached from a new viewpoint. When closely scrutinized, the three approaches already described reveal deficiencies. Each of them underlines important elements of theology, sociology, and practical experience — all of which are indeed important, but none of which can be rightly considered as first and foremost. Moreover, none of these three approaches can rally overall consensus.

The new angle of approach proposed here fits squarely into the educational project that Quebec schools are now striving to define. The focus of our thinking is the ***student****, with his or her concrete needs to learn about life and about religion. We believe that religious education should be conceived and organized to serve this educational goal.*

1. an integral element of the educational programme

39. To perceive the originality of this education-centred approach, we must give up the idea that religion is a separate school subject, a reserved sector, an area controlled by many different authorities, all seeking to assert their rights. Instead, we must look at the school programme as a whole and try to grasp its scope and its requirements. If we isolate religious education because it pertains to individual consciences, because it concerns also the parents and the Churches, or because it is a supremely important matter, then we are following the tendency to consign each aspect of education to a separate compartment. The main consequence of this policy would be that religion could never be anything but a side issue or an extra item in the life of the school. If the teaching of religion is not an integral element of the school curriculum, then it should not be in the school at all.

40. This approach is based on three principles. The first can be expressed as follows: **Religious instruction offered in the schools should be fully justified from an educational viewpoint**. The specific purpose of schooling is education, understood as a process aimed at total development of the human personality. For this reason, schools provide programmes to help students attain full self-development, to become fully themselves. As a result, everything that happens in school should be relevant to this goal and should contribute to its attainment. The school, like any other organism, tends to reject any function or burden that does not suit its nature or purpose. Religious education is expected to prove its compatibility with the objectives of the school, as well as to state what contribution it can make to these objectives.

41. The second principle is this: **education today has to be continuous and permanent**. This principle, which is becoming a truism among educators, has enormous significance and is only beginning to be translated into actual experience. School attendance is now but one intensive period of the educational process, which also includes both pre-school and post-school years. Also, the school is only one among many places where education takes place — a major one, it is true. All this is supremely true of religious education, which now must be viewed against the background of lifelong experience, not restricted to the school situation. It takes place in the midst of events and activities, and is nurtured by different groups and communities. It is a lifelong apprenticeship in the quest for meaning — a hunting of half-perceived or barely-glimpsed meanings, a peering through the constantly recurring shadows where meaning is in jeopardy, elusive, or perhaps non-existent.

42. Our third principle recalls a fundamental fact of education: the centre of all educational activity is the learning person. The main author and actor in education is the student. The entire educational process takes

place in him: in fact, he educates himself. To express this primary truth, experts in education use their own jargon, referring to "the learning subject" or "the self-educator". But the whole idea is expressed much better by the poet Khalil Gibran:

> "No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives, not of his wisdom, but rather of his faith and his lovingness.
>
> If he is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.
>
> The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of space, but he cannot give you his understanding.
>
> The musician may sing to you of the rhythm which is in all space, but he cannot give you the ear which arrests the rhythm, nor the voice that echoes it." (15)

Therefore, if all educational activity is concentrated on the "self-educator", then all aspects of education — teaching, administration, structures, pedagogical methods — should normally be focused on him. This idea is the cornerstone of the whole school system, a point emphasized in a 1970 study of the Superior Council of Education which urged all workers in the field of education to reflect about what constituted the core of all educational endeavour. (16) Religious education, insofar as it aims to be a vital learning process, cannot fail to recognize this principle.

Seeking a new outlook

43. As soon as we look at these three principles, we can glimpse a new orientation, even a complete reversal of attitude towards questions concerning religious education in the schools. We see problems as being primarily educational in nature, rather than theological, sociological, or pragmatic. The new viewpoint gives priority to educational principles and learning requirements. Focusing on education as a lifelong process, we see how indispensable it is to take into account the influence and educational value of experiences outside the school. Finally, the education-centred approach to religious education is aimed directly at the "learner", inciting us to review all aspects of the matter from the learner's standpoint — curriculum, content, pedagogy, organization and structures. All this is but our first observation from the new viewpoint. Little by little, the new outlook will bring a new perspective on religious education, which will then seem like a familiar landscape discovered from a new vantage point.

Our main proposition

44. To clarify the meaning of the approach we propose, we must immediately state our main thesis. Should religion have a place in schools? We answer that it should, because religious education is an integral part of an open educational programme. In support of this answer, we reason from a two fold basis: the concept of the learning subject and the concept of religion.

1. The learner: A Being in Search of Meaning

45. Every educational programme rests on the foundation of a particular concept of the child or the adolescent, a particular judgment of the learner's capacities and his or her potential for development. It is generally agreed that education should provide training in four areas:

a) Training of the body, through physical education, health care, etc.

b) Training in language and art: through reading, writing, self-expression in speech, the graphic arts, music, etc.

c) Training in science: through arithmetic, higher mathematics, and the sciences.

d) Training in human and social values.

There is sometimes a tendency to consider the last-mentioned category as comprising only the development of personal, civic, economic, and social skills. But such an attitude disregards one important level of being; it constitutes, therefore, an arbitrary halt on the pathway of development.

46. It is a fact that man is "a meaning-seeking animal". (17) Children have an innate sense of wonder and admiration. At a very early age, they ask questions of tremendously deep significance: "Why does evil exist?" "Why do people die?" "Why are we alive?" Moreover, they are aware of the role religion plays in their home or their milieu. They participate, in one way or another, in the religious attitudes and practices of their relatives and friends. Adolescents, on the other hand, feel a need to discover for themselves the meaning of beings and situations, as if they were travelling through an unexplored land. They are fascinated by the experience of interpreting things for themselves, of giving meaning to their lives. Why, then, should the schools devise a conspiracy of silence by overlooking these questions in the process of education? Why should they confine themselves to so-called "concrete" matters, concerning the **what** and the **how** of things, while deliberately neglecting the no less real questions about the **why** of things? A refusal to deal with this sphere of enquiry and research puts unreasonable restrictions on students' possibilities of

development. Any modern school that claims to provide an open and integral programme has a duty to offer opportunities for the pursuit of meaning. It should give guidance in this sphere of life, a province of man's true homeland. It seems normal, therefore, that schools should include, in their definition of an educational programme, the objectives of making young people aware of moral and religious matters and of helping them in their quest for life-sustaining meaning.

2. *Religion: A Meaning System*

47. By its very nature, religion constitutes a meaning system. Semantically, the word **religion** remains perplexing, but a hint about the role of religion is found in its etymology, the word being derived either from **relegere** (to re-read the world and to discover its meaning) or from **religere** (to bind the world together, to give it meaning by setting up networks of significance). Essentially, the religious attitude consists of a re-reading or re-interpretation of the world, of man, and of transcendent reality. It would be surprising (to say the least), if schools were to prohibit entry into this sphere of meaning at the very period in young people's lives when they are striving to map out their paths through the world. The message of religion cannot provide them with ready-made meanings, but it will challenge them to discover meanings for themselves or to improve on those proposed. Religion can give students guidance and strength based on a consistent vision of the world. It can also offer them the fruits of the spiritual quest that has been carried on by innumerable generations of mankind. It can throw meaningful light on questions that neither science nor technology can fully elucidate because neither of these approaches can express man in his fullness.

48. Until quite recently, it seemed that science alone possessed the key to knowledge. But now, because of such problems as pollution of the environment and other defects in the "gilded prison" of our affluent society, there is an increasing awareness of the limits of technical change. This, along with expressions of the counter-cultures, has led to a rediscovery of certain other paths which, from time immemorial, have led men to knowledge — the ways of experience, art, ideology, religion. For some time it was believed that only one language was needed to express the total reality of the world — the language of science. Some people still advocate this kind of unilingualism. But there is now a clear understanding that, in addition to the language of numbers and machines, other languages also exist. Experience, art, philosophy, religion — each is a language by itself. It often happens that young people are the first to recognize the value and to defend the rights of these "other languages". Any school seeking to provide an open educational programme should include opportunities for learning all these ways of mankind's self expression. None of these languages should be labelled "second" or "secondary", because all men should become fluent in these languages, if they are to express themselves fully.

49. There may be some objection to this reasoning on the grounds that the language of religion has now become obsolete and irrelevant. However, as we have already noted, we must be on our guard against the overly facile conclusions of pop sociology. The American sociologist, Andrew Greeley, maintains that religion is as important and as relevant today as it was at any time in the past. (18) He lists five functions of religion, using terminology that refers to basic needs that are keenly felt by citizens of contemporary society:

1) **A function of meaning:** "Religion provides man with a "faith" or, to use the sociological terminology, **a meaning system,** which enables him to cope with the question of the Ultimate".
2) **A function of belonging:** "Religion provides man with some **feeling of belonging** with the communal group whose members share ultimate commitments and through that sharing provide strong basic support for one another".
3) **A function of integration:** "Religion strives to **integrate** with the rest of human life the profound and disturbing forces of human sexuality".
4) **A function of contact with the sacred:** "Religion offers man a channel for coming into intimate **contact with the Powers** that are real, a contact which is frequently mystical and ecstatic".
5) **A function of leadership:** "Religion provides man with certain **leaders** whose role is to provide both comfort and challenge when man attempts to wrestle with the Ultimate".

In the light of these five functions, we can see that religious education can provide a unique contribution to the school programme viewed in its entirety.

50. Thus, the conclusion is clear: for those viewing religious education from an education-centred perspective, there can be no doubt that it should be an integral element of any open and liberal school. Concrete applications will be dealt with in the next chapter. But as a question of principle, setting aside the cumbersome legacies of the past and various **a priori** views of politics, history and religion, it cannot be denied that religion has a legitimate place in the school milieu. We can assert that the religious dimension is included in the concept of the complete man, which the UNESCO report proposes as the ultimate objective of education:

> "Respect for the many-sidedness of personality is essential in education, especially in schools, if the individual is to develop as he should, both for himself and his associates. Complex attitudes, indispensable for balanced development of all personality components, must be stimulated and given form in the course of the individual's education... The physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim of education". (19)

2. four conditions of implementation

51. What are the consequences of our proposed change of viewpoint? While acceptance of the principles stated above may be comparatively easy, when it comes to their concrete implementation difficulties arise. It is important, therefore, to examine how religious education according to this approach takes place in the school. We shall set up four standards to be followed, based on the inherent requirements of religious education. These conditions concern: the pedagogy of religious education, its content, the impact of the school ethos, and the type of collaboration expected from parents and other educational agents.

1. Concerning the Method: A Pedagogy of Continuous Progress

52. To accomplish anything in education, there must be continuous attention to the student's motivation, interest, and rhythm of learning. The report on educational activity (Quebec, 1970) stresses that true development can never be forced or imposed from without, because students learn and retain only what they discover for themselves and which acquires personal meaning in their own daily lives. This means that in every field of learning, there must be a pedagogy of natural growth, a pedagogy that accompanies the student on his own journey of exploration and discovery. This ideal is opposed to the pedagogy of indoctrination or conditioning which aims at almost automatic transmission of knowledge and of behaviour patterns. But what a tremendous change of mentality must take place, if this concept of a pedagogy of growth is to be implemented! It implies a complete reversal of former pedagogical convictions and attitudes.

53. A forthright recommendation of this growth-centred pedagogy in religious education is based on a belief in students' dynamic resources and their enthusiasm in the quest for meaning, a quest that ultimately springs from the Spirit's dynamic presence. Even in the sphere of Christian education, people truly **know** only what they discover for themselves, under the influence of the Spirit. They retain only what acquires relevance in their own lives. However true may be the words uttered, be it even the Word of God, they remain empty words which cannot be received and grasped unless the listeners can assimilate the message and make it their very own.

54. These statements may seem astonishing or even contrary to traditional Christian thought that has always held that God's Word comes from on high and that man can never discover it by his own effort. And yet, if we examine more carefully the attitude we are proposing, we shall see that, far from contradicting traditional Christian beliefs, it actually helps us to a better understanding of their meaning. Indeed, the Word comes

from God, but from a God who knows how to speak to men, who spoke to them, therefore, "in many ways" (Heb. 1:1) through history, through the experience of the chosen people, through many prophets, through Jesus and through the primitive Christian community. Revelation was a pedagogy of gradual disclosure and discovery. While it is true that people do not discover faith or attain it by their own efforts, yet reflection on the process of education helps us to understand how people come to believe. Educational theory does not view the learner as a miraculous fountain already filled with knowledge. We must never forget that guides and companions are indispensable to the learner, because they can point the way towards distant realms that the learner might never reach by his own efforts alone. The same is true of Christian education. When the believer is guided on his way by others who have already glimpsed the goal, he really can "discover" for himself and enter the longed-for land that "eye has not seen nor ear ever heard". In one sense, the Word goes ahead of man and draws him onward, but it is also true that the Spirit is already present at the beginning of the quest. This idea is no novelty. The prophet Jeremiah boldly placed the believer, in whom dwells the Spirit, at the very centre of the new covenant:

> "I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts: I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord". (21)

55. When we accept this pedagogy of growth and quest, we must openly renounce all explicit or implicit purpose of regimentation. We must accept the gropings and the lapses of the journey, with its detours and unforeseen stopping points. We must drop plans for general mobilization and policies of a single strategy. The growth concept has particulary significant consequences with regard to pedagogical methods, curriculum planning, and definition of the role of educators. The teaching method used in religious education will have to become much more flexible than formerly, if it is to answer the needs and the different aspirations of both children and adolescents. Similarly, religious instruction and pastoral animation cannot merely follow ready-made, highly structured patterns based on the intrinsic requirements of theology, catechetics, or pastoral principles. Naturally, close attention must be given to such requirements, but the primary element must be the students' own search for answers and their own meaningful experiences. Such a view brings about a change in the role of the educator, who no longer is seen simply as a supplier and transmitter of knowledge, but rather as a guide who offers the travellers companionship and stimulation. We could adopt one of the most significant words of the vocabulary of religion by saying that the educator will become the "initiator" of the neophyte.

2. Concerning Content: Priority for the Christian Religion

56. Religious education in our schools should give priority, in both content and presentation, to the Christian religious tradition. This second principle does not stem from any motive of proselytism, but from the actual requirements of an introduction to religion. A certain secular ideal proposes that young people be introduced to all religions, assigning equal importance to each and letting each student make his own personal choice. Here again we glimpse the concept of the school as a market place where every type of religious merchandise is available. This notion is refuted by the most elementary data of pedagogy and experience. Such a method would never be suggested for language learning. It is normal practice throughout the world for young people to learn first the language of their own home, region, or country — their mother tongue. The same is true for religious initiation. Religion is not an abstract theory floating about in the air or locked up in books. Since Christianity is the predominant religion in North America and here in Quebec, it is normal that it should have priority in our schools and that religious education should be Christian education, either Catholic or Protestant.

57. Still using the analogy of language learning, we can add two other points. We readily understand that the teaching of language cannot be confined to abstract explanations of phonemes and syntagms, but should give each child the ability to speak and express himself with ease. However, certain persons would like to reduce religious education to an objective study of religious facts, as if it would be enough to inform the children about rites of tribal initiation, shamanism, etc. But in the context of a school programme, religious education should first of all aim to make the children acquainted with their "mother" religion, then to learn gradually of different religious options, and little by little to make their own personal response in lucid freedom and with full awareness. Similar reasoning leads us to say that an adult asked to undertake the religious instruction of children should have something more than religious knowledge or erudition: he should feel at home in that sphere, have personal experience, be a believer. We require no less of the language teacher: he must know French or English grammar, but he must also be fluent in the language, feel comfortable speaking French or English.

58. What we have just stated about giving priority to Christianity in teaching religion in Quebec schools does not in any way diminish the importance of following the rhythm of students' personal quest. Teachers of religion, while concentrating on Christianity, should also introduce their students to other religions and such non-religious attitudes as humanism, atheism, agnosticism. The aim is not indoctrination, but the emergence of personal liberty with regard to the world of religion. In the elementary schools, this is accomplished by exploring and reviewing family religious traditions. On the secondary level, it is important to offer a variety of approaches to religion, so that adolescents may become critically aware of the options before them. But on both levels, knowledge of Christianity and a responsible attitude towards it should always be stressed because

of the predominance of Christianity in the tradition of Quebec and of the whole Western world.

3. Concerning the School Milieu as a Threshold of Coherence

59. The process of education requires constant effort on the part of the learner if he is to achieve real and personal knowledge and be nurtured by it. Such effort cannot take place in a setting that is cluttered, either externally or intellectually. The student needs a place where he can give some coherence to his varied types of knowledge. Of course, the first element of cohesion is the learning subject himself, in whom knowledge and experience gradually become coordinated. But his milieu should help him in the search for poles of integration and value. If the messages received are constantly discordant, fragmentary, heterogeneous, they do not contribute to his education, but only stupefy and confuse him. Where no threshold of coherence exists, the student and the school community become disorganized and disintegrated.

60. To attain this threshold of coherence, it is indispensable that the curricula and activities should harmonize with the general aims of the school. But even more is required. There should be a general atmosphere that favours the integration of knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviour. There is no denying that a school creates a particular atmosphere or character by its regulations and disciplinary measures, by the ideals and values it promotes, by the type of relationship that exists among administrators, teachers and students, by its decision-making process, by the way it evaluates students' progress, by the very pace of the schedule of activities. All these various aspects of school organization enter into the formation of "school spirit" which can be stronger and more effective than any speeches. The whole environment in which teaching takes place has as much influence on students as does the subject matter. In the field of education, as in the world of communications "the medium is the message". This need for coherence applies not only to matters of instruction, but also to the whole ethos of the school.

61. This brings up the important question of whether an educational milieu must be homogeneous. This is the basic question that can be raised about confessional schools. In dealing with it, the first point we must stress is the undeniable fact that no education can take place apart from a definite concept of man. This idea is expressed in the Superior Council's study of educational activity:

> "In education, the most important matter is values. It could be summed up in this way: what kind of man do we want to form? All educational activities, school programmes, pedagogical methods depend upon one's concept of man, whether he be today's man (who is really the initial state of to-morrow's man, now growing and taking place in the child and the adolescent) or the adult, who has been penalized by weaknesses of his early education and has returned to his studies or is pursuing them in a changing world". (22)

The ultimate aim of education is a matter of prime importance. If confusion exists on this level, then the whole process of education will be confused and ineffective. If pedagogical effort is to be meaningful, then at least a partial answer to this question must be found. In any given school, for instance, the teachers as a group need to feel that there is basic agreement on the fundamental values pursued. Otherwise, both teachers and students will experience constant strain and strife.

62. The question of how much agreement should exist reminds us of two extreme positions, both of which should be excluded as anti-educational. First, there is the concept of the school as a **shopping centre,** structured according to standard patterns of the consumer society. The school is thought of as a place where the products of learning are freely bought and sold. Ideally, it should offer unlimited options, display all available opinions, allow free circulation of all values. At first sight this model seems attractive, but it is doubtful if the school as an "intellectual supermarket" can be a valid educational ideal. In such a school, students are less concerned with "learning to be", than with consuming knowledge. It is maintained that this system trains young people to make personal choices, but it is more likely to train them to be servile and listless consumers than to become responsible autonomous adults. The distaste students show for such schools corresponds to an increasing surfeit with our society of abundance which offers multiple choices of paltry objects, but shows little concern with the ultimate goals of life. It is surprising to note how often this image of a shopping centre is uncritically accepted as the basis of people's ideas about schools.

63. At the opposite extreme, we find the second concept, which seeks to impose absolute coherence. Here the school resembles a building equipped with **uniform lighting.** Everything taught takes on the same colour because of this central lighting system; practically all shades of difference tend to vanish in the glare. In such schools, the frame of reference is clearly defined: religion displays everything in a completely clear light; the students enjoy complete security! This is all very well, but any milieu where the young are overprotected eventually loses its educational potential. "By trying too hard to protect, we risk life itself. Either security is an illusion and therefore fails to prepare young people to face the risk of life's adventure or else it becomes too important and thus suppresses all initiative... If everything appears in the same bright light, then harmony pervades, but how boring it becomes!" (23) This utterly coherent type of maximum-security school often produces sarcastic, quarrelsome minds, strongly antagonistic to the truths that their teachers have tried to inculcate.

64. Somewhere between these two extremes will be found the indispensable threshold of coherence. At times it may be possible for an entire school community to find a common basis and define for itself a nucleus of values as a focus of all effort. In other instances, coherence may be found only within more limited cells or groups. But whatever degree of coherence may be achieved, religious education calls for an open milieu

where students are constantly required to show discernment, an independent attitude as well as self-criticism. The central lighting type of school and the shopping centre school are both inadequate. What is needed is a school that is like a laboratory of meaning, a place where the student seeks meaning in life and tests the meanings that are discovered and offered to him.

65. Given this context, the Christian understanding of man and of life can be a valuable contribution to the school's educational programme. It can offer a rallying point for educators who agree about the heights and the depths and the full scope of human existence. In this way, Christian faith can help to define the aims of educational institutions. This would not necessarily mean that all members of the staff must fully accept that vision of the world, but the group as a whole would use it as a frame of reference and an axis of coherence in their work as educators. From this angle we can see the confessional character of a school as a useful parameter in the implementation of an educational programme.

4. Concerning Support Needed from the Whole Educational Milieu

66. The school is not an island separated from society. It has no monopoly on the process of education. If its efforts are to be effective, they must be reinforced, developed, enriched, supplemented, transcended by other educational agents: the family, the neighbourhood, interest groups, etc. The Faure report emphasizes the concept of society as a teacher and pointed out that education should be seen as a function of the whole milieu. This report maintains that while the role of the schools is important and will become more so, yet they cannot assume the whole task of education, but must rely on such outstanding educational institutions as industry, administration, the communications media, systems of transport, local groups and the national community. Many centures ago, Plutarch said that "the City is the best teacher". (24)

67. What is true of education in general applies equally to religious education. In our day, the latter cannot be conceived except in a setting comprising the entire range of educational milieux. It postulates a favorable environment, "an educating Church". Today's emphasis on the concept of education as a quest is also stressed in contemporary pastoral thought. Moreover, the link between the school and the family and between the school and the parish has always been considered of prime importance. In today's situation, however, there seems to be a particularly urgent need for "witnessing communities". "Today we must return to the sources of the catechesis, the sources of faith itself — witnessing communities in which dwell the Spirit and the Word". (25) We are reminded, rightfully, that the Church, as a spiritual entity, is the natural setting for the development of faith.

68. Such references to witnessing communities usually provoke the cruel comment that such communities do not exist. Many persons involved in Christian education in the schools have the impression that their efforts simply vanish into the quicksands of apathy and general indifference, or even at times are openly opposed or contradicted by families and parishes. Specious questions keep cropping up: Why do adults want religious education for their children? Is this simply a traditional reflex, a remnant of bygone Christian habits that they are afraid to shake off? How can we explain the fact that so many people who themselves are indifferent to religion, disbelievers, half-believers, or non-practising Christians still boldly insist on the school's providing Christian education? Is this not a lack of logic, a kind of hypocrisy that should be courageously condemned? The time has come, say some people, to give up the illusion of a community which has practically ceased to exist, but which survives briefly by delegating to school experts the task of transmitting the faith. Other persons turn to the Church and say: "Give us witnessing communities and then we shall be willing to accept religious education in the schools".

69. Christian education in the schools is faced with this crucial question that cannot be eluded. To see our way clearly, we must return to the basic thesis of this report. According to this education-centred analysis, we must affirm that while effective collaboration from the milieu in religious education of youth is practically indispensable, yet the school cannot abdicate its purpose and effort, even if the milieu were to give no support. In keeping with the growth-centred approach, education is not primarily a response to the demands of parents or communities, but is above all a response to the needs of an open and learning-centred programme. To express this more directly, we can say that religious education is not offered because the parents request it and support it by their own personal witness. Its primary justification is in the effort to give young people an opportunity to develop all aspects of their personality. Naturally, the school's efforts cannot be truly fruitful without the positive collaboration of the milieu, but it would be an exaggeration to demand the presence of such support before the school would undertake any religious activity.

70. The type of reasoning applied to questions about language teaching or education in under-developed districts should also prevail here. Thus, nobody doubts that language teaching must depend on effective collaboration of the milieu. The school cannot succeed in raising the level of spoken and written language without the combined efforts of families, the work milieu, the media, advertizing, etc. However schools will certainly not abandon their efforts to improve their teaching of French or English under the pretext that the language is poorly used in most kitchens and garages or that there is a current cultural trend to idealize the Quebec speech known as "joual". On the contrary, most people react spontaneously by asking the schools to redouble their efforts to improve the quality of the language. The same holds true with the search for solutions to the problems of educating youth in the lower income areas. To make up for the deficiencies of family life or the environment, there is no hesitation

shown in drawing up programmes that require increased investment of personnel, materials, and educational resources. These two examples should suffice to prove that education should never be simply a reflection of the milieu, but should always be a projection of the milieu. The purpose of education is to remove human limitations: it should enable people to rise higher, to develop themselves, not be inescapably hampered by contemporary human and social constraints. Why then, should we not view religious education in the same way? In this field as in others, the school should not abandon its efforts simply because the milieu is indifferent or closed to religious experience. The school's first and primary consideration must be the totality of its educational project. Where it is not coordinated with vital community efforts, the school's teaching of religion will be more difficult and less fruitful. But even in unfavourable conditions, it does not lose its meaning.

71. To conclude, we may say that religious education belongs in the school primarily as an essential element of an open and total programme. But if it is to be helpful and contribute to self-betterment of the students, it must be closely associated with the many communities outside the school. We could adapt a key expression of the Faure report by saying that it must be linked to "an educating Church". This educating Church should not be thought of in a narrow way as referring only to traditional parish structures, which many people think of when there is mention of "Christian communities". We must accept the fact that "in today's world, each Christian does not automatically belong to one specific, definitive community, but may belong to various groups of many types, some of short duration, where it is important to assert explicit and essential elements of the Christian religion". (26) Thus the educating Church develops from the simultaneous activity of many different educational units in many different settings where Christian forms of thought and action take shape — the family, various associations, parishes, small Christian communities, different types of gatherings, and, of course, the school.

3. objectives and evaluation

72. We must now define the objectives of religious education in the school and consider how they can be evaluated. What should religious education strive to accomplish within the context of our education-centred approach? Where does it lead the student? What type of spiritual mentality is it likely to foster? How are we to judge the effectiveness of the classroom programme of religious education?

An Area of Development that is Hard to Measure

73. We readily admit that the area of development we are discussing here is hard to describe and to evaluate. When we deal with the learning of exact skills that are somewhat like automatic reflexes — arithmetic, reading, spelling — it is relatively easy to set progress levels, to regulate the rhythm and methods of progress, to evaluate acquired knowledge. But in the case of activities related to the essence of personality — learning to think independently, to become responsible, to find meaning in experience — then measurement standards are tentative, which makes evaluation more difficult. But these learning processes, though less standardized and measurable, are not less important. What is least measurable, as a matter of fact, are often the most valuable and most durable elements in the formation of personality. (27) Worthwhile efforts are now being made to evaluate the whole field of education. In this process, objectives must be defined and achievement must be regularly evaluated for every subject of study. Religious education is not exempted from this requirement. Preliminary efforts in this direction have proved beneficial. However, certain technocratic minds, carried away by their enthusiasm for planning, may be tempted to overestimate what is easily measured and underestimate what is less measurable. In this case, there is a risk that religious education may be looked upon as unimportant and be relegated to an inferior category along with literature, art, and the human sciences. To make sure that the real value of these less measurable forms of training will be properly recognized, the criteria used for administrative and statistical purposes should be weighted in relation to the overall objectives of the school.

1. The Objectives

74. To educate means to help a person to grow in every educational field — physical, artistic, scientific, moral, or religious — the first purpose is always to help the student to grow, to become more fully himself, to develop as a free, responsible, fulfilled person. Religious education contributes to this process of growth in two ways: by helping the student to attain religious maturity and by giving him an opportunity to explore the world of religion. These are the two inseparable aspects of all religious education. To be authentic, it must provide constant dialogue between subjective experience and the objective data of religion. The study of religion should simultaneously deepen both personal experience and reli-

gious knowledge. Christian education should be a dialogue between life and the Word, between the discovery of life in the light of God's word and the discovery of the Word in the light of life. These two alternating rhythms are united in one learning process. By this double rhythm, religious education has to be coordinated and harmonized within the whole school life as well as in its own two specific activities, religious instruction and pastoral animation.

The Student's Progress towards Religious Maturity

75. We established previously (cf. No. 49) that religion can make a contribution to the educational process as a whole and that this contribution derives from the specific functions of religion. We believe, therefore, that besides defining the objectives of religious education in terms of students' needs, we should also relate these objectives to the five functions attributed to religion. Thus we can say that the purpose of religious education is the development of the following five senses:

- **The Sense of Coherence:** Bernanos has said that "man does not live by things, but by the meaning of things". The activities of religious education should give young people a desire to investigate the meaning of things,help them in their gradual conquest of meaning where it is unclear or lacking in their personal lives, in school, in society or in the Church. Thus, religious instruction and pastoral animation should be conceived primarily as ways of attaining meaning through experience and in the light of religious faith. Above all, these activities should be "meaningful" and they can be insofar as they speak to students "in their own language about their own concerns" (as they say) or enable them "to straighten out their mixed-up lives" or "see a clearer picture of themselves and the world".

- **The Sense of Belonging:** This sense is experienced by satisfying within a group, fundamental needs that are common to everyone: the need to love and be loved, the need to be creative, the need to understand. To foster this sense, religious education should provide an experience of fraternity and solidarity, thus counteracting feelings of isolation and anonymity through concrete opportunities for communication and communion. Those in charge of pastoral animation should find ways to develop this feeling of belonging to a group, a local community, a more extended community.

- **The Sense of Integration:** Religious education should help students to fit into an integrated whole various new realms of knowledge both internal and external, that are fascinating, yet may be threatening – the realm of personality that emerges with its impulses and aspirations; the scientific world with its data and questions; the realm of human and international relations with all its potentialities, its failures, its complexities.

- **The Sense of Contact with the Sacred:** Religious education cannot confine itself to talking about God and religion, but should offer actual experience of contact with God by prayer, feasts, and liturgy. There should be activities that open an inner door to religion by means of interior experience, symbols, poetic expression.

- **The Sense of Moral Responsiveness:** A religious outlook brings not only heightened awareness, but also heightened action. Religious education should teach students to perceive and to choose values that enhance the quality of life.

Exploration of the Whole Field of Religion

76. Religion is a vast, complex world of meaning. Just as one explores a continent by visiting its shores and regions one by one, so one comes to know religion. Eventually we become familiar with its various aspects, just as a stranger reaches a point of feeling at home in a city by his gradual acquaintance with its different districts. To indicate what a vast field of knowledge is comprised in religious education, it is useful to list here the six dimensions or facets of religion. (28)

- **Doctrinal Dimension:** Every religion includes a body of doctrines, a whole system of beliefs and dogmas that gives it a particular outlook on the world.

- **Historical Dimension:** An essential element of religion is its history — as found in factual accounts, legends, traditions, sacred books.

- **Ethical Dimension:** Every religion provides its members with a code of principles and observances related to its doctrines.

- **Ritual Dimension:** There is no religion without a liturgy — a body of rites, feasts, and ceremonies that foster contact with the sacred.

- **Experiential Dimension:** This is the personal, subjective, interior, mystical side of religion. At the source of the religious attitude, there is always a direct experience of awe, a response to a presence, a loving relationship to which the believer responds by acceptance and dedication in faith and prayer.

- **Social Dimension:** Religion has an influence on society. In varying degrees, it leaves its mark on mentalities, affects controversies and choices concerned with man's future destiny.

77. This is the vast world to be explored. To cover it completely would take an entire lifetime. Consequently, it would be unrealistic to expect the school programme to provide complete knowledge of these six aspects

of religion. To attain such an objective will require concerted and continuous efforts on the part of all the agents of education, each having its own specific contribution to make. The family has a preponderant influence on the discovery of religion as personal experience and in its moral consequences. Communities such as the parish and smaller Christian groups have special responsibility and competence in what concerns the liturgical and social aspects of faith. The school can give the young people an opportunity to experience these same aspects in a wider context than the family and with a different approach than that of the community. It provides a systematic and orderly exploration of the subject. We can reasonably expect, however, that the school's special role will be to help the students to understand religious attitudes and events, to teach the basics of religious knowledge, to provide an introduction to sacred history and sacred books. The school's major contribution should lie in this direction because of the very nature of educational institutions. But while this is the dominant contribution, it is by no means exclusive. The school should not deliberately ignore any of the aspects of the total experience of religion.

78. The two inseparable aspects of religious education — personal growth and the introduction to the whole field of religion — constitute an indispensable frame of reference whenever we must determine or evaluate the objectives of Christian education in the school. Whether we are concerned with religious instruction, pastoral animation, or an evaluation of the Christian quality of school life, this double aspect should always be kept in mind. On the one hand, we have the young people seeking their personal options; on the other hand, there is the whole world of religion to be discovered. With the help of this frame of reference and in the light of the general educational aims of the school, it will be possible to define and evaluate the specific objectives of religious instruction and pastoral animation.

2. Evaluation

79. Whenever the activities of religious education are to be evaluated, there arises a complex question, which, unfortunately, has not received much attention: how are values communicated or handed down? This is a truly crucial question, because the primary aim of religious education is to transmit religious values. But can such values really be taught? How can education in Christianity be achieved in our day? How can the values of the Gospel be transmitted? It is not enough to answer: "by witness", because this just puts the question one step back. How can personal witness become contagious? We must make some attempt to clarify this central problem.

80. Values are ideals, goals, norms that guide conduct and allow people to discern good from evil, to choose the best of several good objectives. Values affect us like magnets: they polarize the heart, the mind, and the energies, causing either human betterment or human deterioration. No-

body can live without values. But people can live without ever clearly understanding the values that form the basis of their lives. Only a man who can define the values that animate him and choose those on which he will build his life can claim to enjoy true liberty. Here we have an educational objective of prime importance. But how can we help young people to attain this level of freedom? This question can be answered in one of two different ways, corresponding to two models. According to the first model, society is seen as stable and values are handed down by tradition; according to the second model, suited to a changing society, values are acquired by free choice.

Tradition of Values

81. In a relatively stable society, a scale of values is pre-established and accepted by the population as a whole. Thus, scarcely twenty years ago, our society was characterized by a set of values that were well defined, stable, arranged in an orderly sequence of priorities. Values were fixed by four institutions: the Church, the family, the school, and the government. These were like four home ports, all clearly visible, all flying the same flag, and urging everyone to adopt the same values. There was little room for dissension and few who deviated from the norm. Values were transmitted by a kind of osmosis, by a tradition that flowed through all the channels of society.

Free Choice of Values

82. In today's changing society, the four home ports where values were customarily anchored are no longer clearly visible. Indeed they seem shrouded in fog. The Church doubtless retains a keen perception of values, but there is no longer agreement as to priorities. Consequently, tension arises between such complementary values as authority and service, liberty and unity, commitment and detachment. The whole world has become a global village; as a result, homes and schools are now affected by cultural, ethnic, social, and religious pluralism. Government has been secularized and, in the opinion of many, "desacralized". All sorts of ideas circulate and even the most eccentric theories find some supporters. There is no longer any stable scale of values, no fixed harbor. The values fluctuate or "float" just like the international stock markets.

83. In this world of fluctuating values, the transmission of acquired, standardized, readymade values seems less important than the art of evaluating situations and making personal choices. In the midst of a flood of discordant messages, one must learn how to develop in oneself and for oneself the ability to judge what is good, what is wrong, what is better. Travellers without home ports must learn to anchor their values to a lucid, enlightened conscience. In such predicaments, values are acquired by free choice, by personal effort. A double task follows for each individual: the necessity of clarifying one's own values, and the necessity of choosing values.

84. The first step needed is **clarification of values**. Today's society has blurred the perception of values by allowing free circulation of all values, non-values, counter-values. At the same time, it secretes its own values almost imperceptibly, its own concept of well-being, of human success and happiness. In this destructurized setting, many people feel disoriented and confused, unable to find their directions. Young people, in particular, often admit that they feel lost. So we see how important a task it is to help them to perceive and define what values motivate them, to find indicators of values that are formed in their minds. They should realize what embryonic or fully-formed values exist for them and already influence their choices. "What has value for me? In such and such a situation, how do I make my choices? What things do I consider important? What are my real desires?" (29) This process of value-clarification and self-orientation is indispensable to men of today. They are like hikers lost in the forest: they need to stop and use a compass to establish just where they are. The halt is necessary and enables them to start off again.

85. The second process is learning **how to choose values**. This ability to choose and acquire values cannot be developed automatically or imposed from without. The acceptance of values must always be a personal response to experience. This point is illustrated by what is known as transactional analysis. (30) This type of analysis examines interpersonal relationships (called "transactions"). It is said that every individual is made up of three simultaneous states: the child, the parent, and the adult. We must note, however, that transactional analysis gives these three words meanings quite different from that of ordinary language. The child self refers to the emotional elements of the personality — feelings, tastes, passions. The parent self refers to the totality of messages and commands that each person has received from tradition and feels obliged to transmit. The adult self refers to the ability to think and to make choices on the basis of personal experience. No two persons can have a genuine dialogue unless they face each other as adults while making allowance for the child and the parent in their personalities. No education is possible except in an "adult-to-adult" transaction. As long as an educator acts as a parent towards the students by addressing the child in them, the students react as children and do not attain adulthood. When an effort is made to transmit ready-made values (from the parent-self), the student reacts, as a child, showing opposition, refusal or puerile acceptance. If we wish to prepare students to choose their own values, we must help them to reach the state of adulthood, that is, enable them to evaluate their own experiences, judge situations, take decisions and estimate the consequences. Educators are not called upon to transmit ready-made values, but to accompany the students on the quest for their own values. Moral and religious education in the school has a task more important than displaying all values and saying the last word about each. Its principal task is to teach students how to look for values, to avail themselves of the help and companionship of **people** who can communicate a taste for independent decision-making — parents, school mates, teachers, spriritual guides and fellow-believers.

86. These few words about value transmission suffice to show the importance of this matter in religious education. Today's social milieu does not simply demolish scales of value, but questions the whole system of value transmission. This entails serious consequences for the question we are discussing — the purpose of religious education in the schools. In today's fluctuating social context, it would be useless to expect religious instruction in the school to produce results identical to those of twenty years ago when the context was completely different. All expectations concerning schools should be reviewed,for these are inevitably marked by the cultural ideals of our society. Those who believe that values can be transmitted like a legacy, like the title to property, will expect religious education to produce measurable uniform results. On the other hand, those who hold that values are transmitted more through experience and a long process of assimilation will not evaluate results in terms of uniform general knowledge and behaviour. They expect different species of fruit that are slower to ripen, but perhaps more life-sustaining, for example, spontaneity, authentic religious self-expression, sensitivity of conscience, sense of personal and social responsibility, an attachment to God's word, a liking for true community, a determination to seek meaning in life.

87. Religious education in the school cannot guarantee that on graduation, students will be men and women with a religious spirit, faithful parishioners. Indeed we may question whether Christian schools have ever managed to accomplish this. The Greeley-Rossi survey of Catholic schools in the United States showed that the school strenghtened students' religious options only when the family milieu was already exerting influence in that direction. (31) However that may be, it is normal to expect that the school will enable students to make a personal religious choice in an enlightened way. The school cannot force meaning upon students, but can help them to seek their own. It cannot impose faith upon them, but it can show them that religious faith can foster freedom as a source of understanding, transcendence, and commitment. The school is not wholly or even principally responsible for whether or not a particular student will believe and practise his religion in the future. This choice, which is both personal and very mysterious, is related to many other factors — the family, the neighbourhood, life experience, and so on. But the school should foster the students' moral and religious growth.

88. To sum up, we list our principal conclusions and proposals concerning our concept of religious education in the schools.

1. Religious education in schools cannot properly be dealt with, if it is considered only as a theological, sociological, or pragmatic issue. (Numbers 8-38)

2. Religious education in the school should be justified on educational grounds. It is expected to be a specific input to the goals of education.

3. Religious education is an integral part of a liberal and open school programme. (Number 44)

4. Religious education in the school answers the need of young people for meaning. It gives them the opportunity to explore the world of religion, which throughout history has been an important source of meaning and experience for mankind. (Numbers 45-50)

5. Religious education should meet certain basic criteria. Its method should be a pedagogy that respects self-development. As to content, it should give priority to the Christian religious tradition, which prevails in Quebec and throughout the Western world. As to its context, it requires a threshold of coherence in the whole of school life. Finally, it needs to be relayed and upheld by families and communities. (Numbers 51-71)

6. The concept of religious education here proposed rejects two extreme forms of religious education: one that would verge on indoctrination; another that would limit itself to information about religious facts. (Numbers 55-57)

7. Religious education in the schools has two main objectives: to lead students towards religious maturity and to provide opportunities for the exploration of various aspects of religion: doctrine, history, ethics, ritual, personal experience, social expression. (Numbers 74-78)

part three

In the field of religious education, there are a number of commonplace notions that are rarely criticized, difficulties that have not been overcome, dilemmas that seem inescapable. As a result, action as well as thought are often obstructed and all efforts are doomed to failure.

The viewpoint here proposed is an invitation to escape from those arguments and paralyzing dilemmas. It enables us to abandon certain dead-end paths and to see a clear way ahead, to bring about a convergence of the efforts of all the various agents concerned with religious education in the schools.

1. is any consensus possible?

89. In discussions of religious education in schools, such divergent views are held by parents, teachers, students, pastors, and administrators that it seems difficult, if not impossible to find grounds of reconciliation. Each group looks at the question from its own particular viewpoint and finds it hard to transcend the narrow limits of parental, academic, personal, pastoral or administrative interests. The educational approach we are proposing, while it does not cancel out these different basic positions, has the advantage of offering a possibility of agreement, a kind of target of convergence. Each defendant is invited to transcend the tactics of simply asserting his rights, duties, and convictions, whether he be a believer, a half-believer, or a non-believer. He should examine his rights, duties, and convictions in the light of what is best on **educational grounds**. In other words, the appeal is to each person in his role as **educator**, whether he be father or mother, teacher, administrator or pastor. This perspective eludes false controversy that blocks and paralyzes action. Thus a convergence of attitudes can start to emerge.

90. It must be noted that we are not speaking of cut-price bargaining agreements. In a pluralistic setting, there is always a temptation to look for the lowest common denominator, to bring out a stock of vague clichés, to make a selection of the most acceptable elements of the religious heritage, to devise all sorts of compromises where each contributes what he pleases. Such a policy would produce a school programme with diluted, colourless content, unlikely to offend anyone, but not satisfying anyone. The educational approach opposes this tendency and encourages a search for what is best and most worthwhile for each student or group of students, allowing for their stage of growth and their age. It proposes convergence on a higher level, the level of educational needs which may not always be as exalted as theology, parents, and pastors might wish, but which is the highest level accessible to the particular students at that time. Education is not attained by cable car: each climber must reach his own peak, step by step.

91. But is any consensus possible? It might well be doubted, if one were to consider religious attitudes only, or educational opinions only. Any radio program dealing with such subjects proves the enormous divergence in current viewpoints. At first sight the increase in intellectual and ideological divergence would seem to exclude all possible agreement. We might even suppose that outright clashes are inevitable. But as a matter of fact, people do continue to agree on a certain number of human objectives. Even in a society of divided ideologies there are still common fields of activity, projects that unite people. Schools are run; communication is provided; churches welcome believers. Beyond the echo of innumerable divisions, there exists a kind of practical consensus that is not intellectual, but experienced.For instance, no one wants to see education in a muddle. By tacit consent, there is agreement that schools should prepare young people not only to earn their living, but also to become genuinely free,

responsible, idealistic, capable of commitment. In every milieu and in every country,whatever be the prevailing ideology, the objective of education is to enable the young to live on a high moral level, above that of society in general. This "relative sanctity" of schools is not in itself a sign of hypocrisy or naïveté, but an indication of the human desire for transcendence and a better life. It certainly is not inevitable that schools will become towers of Babel. In various milieux attempts are already being made to identify a nucleus of common values, as a basis for educational activity.

1. The Reaction of Teachers

92. The educational approach appeals to teachers on the very ground of their professional concerns. It emphasizes an aspect of education that no true educator can ignore, whatever may be his area of specialization or his personal attitude to religion. Teachers of religion and pastoral animators will find this approach compatible with trends of thought now attracting them. These teachers and animators are increasingly insisting that they should be considered educators, on the same basis as their colleagues in charge of other subjects of instruction. Said one teacher of religion "People address us as if we were evangelists, missionaries, prophets, pastors, guardians of public morality. But by choice and by profession, we are primarily educators." This new awareness that teachers of religion should be respected as educators can help enhance the prestige of religious education. It must be taken into consideration in training and enrichment courses for teachers of religion and pastoral animators. Much attention is generally given to their doctrinal and pedagogical enrichment, but the educational and social value of their activity is too often overlooked.

2. The Reaction of Pastors

92. Pastors will not fail to detect a significant change of mentality in the educational approach, which gives predominance to education goals over evangelization. Is this acceptable? We must first recognize that this approach rejects the concept of religious education as a process of indoctrination aiming to produce believers at any cost. It also rejects the concept of religious education as a mere transmission of factual information about religion. There should be no objection to this, because education in the faith, if properly understood, is not a matter of indoctrination or propaganda.

94. In the second place, it is entirely clear that this approach deliberately emphasizes the specific role of the school which should be more than a relay of the educational function of family and parish. Our approach will encourage the school to make the best and most useful specific contribution to religious education. In turn, it also urges families and communities to do the same, to make their own specific and irreplaceable contribution. This distinction is essential, if we are to avoid a state of harmful confusion where each side expects the other to do everything. The school inevitably risks causing disappointment, if it is expected to play roles that

transcend its competence and resources. In any case, there is an ever increasing trend for schools to refuse such roles, and rightly so. On the other hand, it is advisable for the family, the parish, and the school to adopt different approaches to religion. It is indispensable that children and adolescents be able to get a new grasp on faith in a setting outside the family or parish, in a milieu that is different but not alien, with educators who approach religion from a different angle, among comrades who share the quest and give witness as a group.

95. We can even add a third point and claim that our educational approach can illuminate and enrich current thinking about education in general and religious education in particular. The goal of pedagogical sciences is to investigate the process of man's self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. They map out the paths of intellectual growth, self-betterment, personal fulfillment, and in a way, the paths of man's "salvation". If it is true that grace does not destroy nature and rebirth in the Spirit in no way interferes with birth to oneself, then the paths towards knowledge of faith follow the paths of all knowledge, though faith leads to a more distant destination. Education in faith ought to be eminently **educational**. Neither pastoral effort nor evangelization need fear anything from a form of religious education that strives to respect the laws of man's development (the word "education" is from the Latin **educere**: to lead forth) in knowledge, of himself, of the universe and of God.

3. The Reaction of Parents

96. For parents, this educational approach can be enlightening in two ways. In the first place, it helps them understand orientations that have already been adopted implicitly by many teachers and animators in charge of religious education. Parents are at times disturbed by the content, methods and style of religious education and pastoral animation. They have the impression that these activities are governed only by whims or a craze for novelty. The new approach reminds them that a genuine educational intent is often at the basis of current trends. Efforts are made to introduce methods of religious training that are relevant and valuable to young people living in a world that is very different from the past in family life, society,culture, the school, and religion. In the second place, our approach can help parents understand their own specific role as educators. The new orientation proposes that the objective to be kept constantly in mind is religious self-development of the young. When dealing with questions or difficulties concerning religious knowledge, practice, or attitudes, the answers and solutions should be judged on their educational value. What is most likely to help young people to make progress in the area of their religious options? Here again, the pedagogy of faith and pedagogy in general coincide. It is often said that with regard to religion, it is less important to keep the rules than to keep advancing. Similarly, a true pedagogue, as indicated by the etymology of the word, is one who leads the young by keeping them on the move and accompanying them on their quest.

97. The goal of self-development also puts greater stress on the parents' real interest in their children's religious training. It is not an easy task to interpret the desires and wishes of parents in this regard. There is a real risk of misunderstanding. Too ready an acceptance of rash sociological conclusions or pessimistic views of the current situation may lead to a disregard of certain major factors that are extremely important. Three remarks must be made here. In the first place, parents certainly have a spontaneous desire for whatever is best for their children. Even if religion is ignored or rejected by them or considered of secondary or marginal interest, yet many of them still want or wish it to have meaning for their sons and daughters. At least, they want their children to have an opportunity to make an enlightened personal option. Let us not label this attitude as frivolity, sentimentality, or hypocrisy: parents too have a right to make plans and they quite naturally want their children to be better than themselves, more fulfilled and better able to face life's challenges, to face the future and to face religion. There is even a touch of humour in the remark of a French educator: "Almost always people behave better towards their children than they do towards themselves". (32)

98. Our second remark is this: there are times in life when people take sides in a way that is hard to justify on rational grounds alone. For instance, why do the people of Quebec have such a strong attachment to the French language? This is an option with serious cultural and economic consequences, an option that is not at all superficial, even though too many people make little effort to speak French well. Why do some people insist on living in low-income districts or in little villages without prospects? It is sometimes hard to say why we cling to certain things. Similarly, it will always be difficult for parents to answer the question: "Why do you desire religious education for your children?" When they hesitate, stammer, or offer inadequate answers, it would be easy to conclude that the desire is superficial or insignificant. But such a conclusion could show serious misunderstanding, besides expressing contempt and arrogance.

99. Our third point concerns the use of statistics of religious practice as a criterion of parents' and teachers' lack of interest in religious education for the young. The drop in active Church membership is a well known phenomenon and can be observed everywhere, though to different degrees in different milieux and age groups. Polls and surveys keep appearing regularly to prove the extent and the rate of this trend. There is a great temptation to think that these figures reflect people's real attitudes towards education in the faith. But here again there is a risk of misunderstanding. It must be noted that what the surveys show is the rate of attendance at Sunday Mass. It would be a mistake to identify this liturgical observance with the practice of **Christian life**, understood broadly as a life of charity, hope, sharing, pardon of offenses and witness of faith. One must take care not to impart to statistics of cultural religious phenomena a meaning which they cannot have. They do not reveal the whole of people's thought on religion. Parents and teachers may very well show genuine interest in religious education for youth, even if they themselves do not regularly attend Sunday Mass. (33)

4. Ecumenical Implications

100. Finally, we must stress the ecumenical implications of this approach. In Quebec, religious education takes place in schools with clearly defined denominational differences. Elsewhere in Canada, the situation varies considerably from one province to another, but historical differences among various Christian churches have frequently been a major obstacle to inclusion of religious education in public schools. In some instances this has even led to the exclusion of all discussion of religion in schools. In recent years, however, there has been a growing trend throughout Canada to encourage a type of religious education based on the child's right to learn about religion, rather than on denominational lines. When the different denominations are willing to review the question in the light of total self-development, rather than from the viewpoint of each Church's particular doctrine, then an ecumenical convergence begins to appear. At a recent conference in Toronto, organized by the Canadian Ecumenical Institute, 150 delegates represented the entire range of Christian churches in Canada. As a base for their study and action, they accepted the principle that every child has a right to be initiated into the values of his socio-religious inheritance and that therefore his education should include instruction in religion, directed towards a responsible commitment. (34)

2. the educational viewpoint and confessional schools

101. Traditionally, the place of religion in education has been asserted and assured by the confessional character of the schools. In Quebec, the legal status of confessional schools guarantees religion as a part of the school curriculum and full rights to teach religion and to provide pastoral animation. This confessional aspect of our schools often provokes questions and controversy. What does it really signify in practice? Is it still meaningful in our day? Is the label "Catholic" or "Protestant" misleading, designed merely to reassure people or does it indicate a truly distinctive feature that should be taken seriously? Why would we depend upon confessional structures, when what is really important are individuals and their personal witness? We could multiply the questions, clichés, and insinuations. But that would only lead us back to the point where we started this whole report — the entire background of convictions and pre-established judgments. As a consequence of the reflections presented here, we may now find a different way of asking our questions about confessional schools. We may see the usual answers in a different light. From the viewpoint of our learning-centred approach, what becomes of the concept of confessional schools?

102. It is not our purpose here to deal with the specific nature of confessional schools or the many different aspects of the matter. Such an immensely complex subject would require a detailed study of the history of education in Quebec; an analysis of the present juridical status of Confessional schools in the public and private sectors; a review of the principles guiding both Church and State school policy; finally, an examination of different options and various possible alternative solutions. (35) Our objective is more limited. We simply want to see how the proposed educational approach can modify the usual way of discussing the problems of confessional schools. Does it give clearer understanding? We think so. Three points can help us to re-examine the whole matter in a lucid and unbiased way.

1. Religious Education: a Normal Feature of Every School

103. The educational approach leads to this first conclusion: **every school should include religion in its curriculum**. Negatively, this means that the religious fact should not be considered as a matter of marginal, "special", or negligible interest. Thus, schools adopting this viewpoint neither grant privileges to Churches nor try to substitute their own efforts for those of the Churches, but simply declare the full intent and extent of their educational programme. On the positive side, this means that religion is recognized as a subject of study on the basis of general educational principles and for the sake of its specific contribution to the overall plan of students' development. It must be noted that this holds true for all schools, confessional or not. Thus respect for religion as a school subject

cannot be considered a monopoly of the confessional school, but should be affirmed as a feature of all institutions offering an open educational programme. Consequently, this viewpoint rejects the hypothesis of the neutral school, devoid of any reference to religion; a fortiori, it rejects the militant lay school that actively opposes religion. In any case, this latter type of school is now generally considered narrow and anachronistic. In several countries, especially France and the United States, where the question of religion in the school has long been highly controversial, there is now a trend to transcend overly rigid interpretations of government impartiality.

2. Various Possible Degrees of Integration of Religion

104. It has been established above (cf 59-65) that education requires a minimum of coherence among the different subjects of study as well as in school life as a whole. A threshold of coherence should be assured, below which no genuine development is possible. Naturally, this threshold varies greatly according to the students' age, scholastic level, and sociocultural milieux. And once this minimum is attained, we can conceive various degrees of further integration of religion and of differing school policies on the matter.

- An institution may recognize religion by giving a place in the school timetable to religious teaching and pastoral animation for those students who are interested. This is the first degree of integration. It risks being weak and fragile, but it opens the way for initiative and participation on a voluntary basis. This is the situation that prevails in the Quebec colleges (CEGEPS).

- A step beyond that is the concept of a school where religious education would be obligatory for all and where a great variety of options is available, so that no individual can take offense and all religious opinions would be respected. No student would be exempted from the study of religion, but the religious doctrine of various denominations (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) would be taught, along with the study of cultural aspects of religion — history, anthropology, etc. This system would have the merit of asserting that it is important for all students to receive religious instruction of one type or another. It is a situation that prevails in the schools of certain parts of England and Germany. Here in Quebec, we might say that the fairly large number of schools that operate under agreements between Catholic and Protestant School Boards are in a somewhat similar situation.

- Integration and coherence can be greater still. It can extend to the choice of one religion as the point of reference and the inspiration of the entire educational activity of the school. This implies that in general students and teachers and administrators all accept and respect this orientation. But such a school may recognize the rights of a dissident minority and provide procedures to allow teachers and students to be exempted

from religious teaching or study. This is the type of confessional school which exist in Quebec as defined by the regulations of the Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education.

- An even greater degree of coherence can be envisaged with regard to the personnel and structures of the institution. This would occur in a school where a concerted efforts is made to assure a stricter religious unanimity of staff and students, where the entire organization, functioning, and recruitment would be on a denominational basis. That situation can be found in the private sector of education in Quebec.

These are the various possibilities available for integrating religion in school programmes, according to different degrees of coherence and uniformity. We can state a priori that all these schools can be considered open, tolerant, respectful of religion as such. But in practice, one or the other type may seem preferable in view of the various factors affecting the choice of religious orientation in a particular school: the students' age groups, scholastic levels, cultural milieu, juridical tradition, parents' desires.

105. This wider view of the possibilities for integration of religion has the advantage of breaking with the current dualism that tends to look at only two alternatives: the confessional school or the neutral school. According to the wider view, we need no longer think that on the one hand, we have the confessional school with full merits, while on the other hand, we have the neutral school, which may bring disaster. Or there is the converse argument that on the one hand is the non-denominational school that can solve all our problems, while the confessional school is necessarily regressive. The approach we have suggested allows for a wide range of possibilities and thus enables a choice to be made in a lucid and calm way. This is not the case when we are confined to the usual dualism that makes the unwanted alternative seem so disastrous that any choice seems a menace and there seems to be no solution except in clinging more firmly to one's own battlements. At that point, all margin for compromise disappears. In such a setting of black-and-white opposition, the learning-centred attitude offers a full range of differences in types of schools. Where the tendency was formerly to draw a rigid dividing line between two mutually exclusive models, now the new orientation introduces colour and shading into the whole picture.

106. As soon as this wider range of possible positions is admitted, the issue of confessional schools becomes easier to handle. In any case, the elements of bigotry — religious or secular — that are found in some policies are considerably attenuated. It becomes definitely clear that no one type of school confessional or non-confessional, can provide a solution applicable to every situation. With the increasing diversity of situations, no single model can be used everywhere or lay claim to being the **universal** ideal. In this context, there is great relevance in that the Council Decree on Christian Education says about the various ways Christians can be present in schools. It is evident that their efforts can be worthwhile in various types of schools.

3. The Students' Primary Right

107. The educational approach brings out another point. In seeking answers to questions concerning confessional schools, we must not forget that students' interests come first. We know that the interests of various authorities are involved in this question of confessional schools — parents, the Church, the State all proclaim their rights and duties. There are many authorities claiming power over the school territory and this is likely to bring about struggles. It would be disastrous if all these authorities concerned were to carry on their own conflicts, apart from the young inhabitants of the school land, perhaps at their expense. It should never be forgotten that their rights have priority. The school does not exist for the sake of the State or the Church or the parents or the teachers — it is primarily for the students, to assure their all-round education. What should direct all efforts of the various authorities is the search for concrete conditions most likely to foster total education and truly assure the cultural, social, human, and religious maturity of the young. Here again, the educational view of confessional schools should receive priority over considerations related to history, sociology, the law, ideology, politics, or theology.

108. Were it possible to establish this priority from the start, problems concerning the status and meaning of the confessional character of schools would be more easily solved. We must emphasize two important factors: the students' age group and their school level. It is quite understandable that younger children need a greater degree of coherence in their school. They need to feel a close union of family and school life; they need a uniform atmosphere. Nothing would be gained by removing them from the family setting and sending them into a kind of cultural and religious exile. We must keep in mind that children seize life comprehensively without making adult distinctions between different roles, uses, and aspects of things. Adolescents are better able to face differences of milieu, which can have educational value. However, too great a gap between home and school can be harmful to them. Similarly, during the later teens and in early adulthood, young people's gradual acquisition of liberty and personal autonomy should be recognized and fostered. Thus, in evaluating the status and definition of confessional schools, due allowance should be made for the fact that students have differing capacities at different levels of education.

«Confessional» Schools: Understood as an Analogy

109. In conclusion, it can be noted that the educational point of view reveals that the concept of "confessional" schools (like the concept of education in general) does not have a uniform meaning. In other words, the adjective "confessional" is not always used in the same sense. The meaning varies and takes on different nuances according to the levels of education discussed (elementary, secondary, post-secondary), according to the sectors (public or private), and according to different socio-cul-

tural milieux (uniformly Catholic, pluralist, cosmopolitan, etc.). The theologian Raymond Laflamme, whom we already quoted at the beginning of this report, has stated that "from the Catholic point of view, it is good theology to envisage various types of confessional schools, because the very concept of "Catholic" or "Protestant" with reference to schools is a kind of analogy." (36) This idea is important and it encourages us to proceed in a flexible, rather than a rigid way, when we strive to define how confessional schools can be adapted to particular milieus.

conclusion

a new outlook

110. It seems that change occurs in only two situations: either when a position becomes untenable or when a new outlook is acquired. This booklet has not sought to provide practical solutions for the many difficult and concrete problems encountered in giving religions education in the School. It had another purpose which was to introduce a new outlook.

references

(1) W.F. Ryan, **L'Église et l'éducation au Québec**, dans **École et société**, de P.W. Bélanger et G. Rocher, HMH, 1970, p. 187.

(2) S.J. Curtis, **History of Education in Great Britain**, quoted in **The Fourth R**, The Durham Report on Religious Education, National Society SPCK, London, 1970, p. 1.

(3) Faure Report, UNESCO: **Learning to Be**, Harrap, London, 1972, p. 143.

(4) "Declaration on Christian Education" in **The Documents of Vatican II**, ed. Walter M. Abbott, America Press, 1966, p. 640.

(5) **Ibid.**, p. 639.

(6) In 1970, the number of students being educated in Catholic institutions was evaluated at about forty million. This is less than one tenth the total school population of the world, estimated to be 435 million in 1968. (See tables in the Faure Report, op. cit.).

(7) Declaration on Christian Education, op. cit. p. 645.

(8) R. Laflamme, «La doctrine scolaire de l'Église: sa permanence et son insuffisance» dans A. Baby et coll. **Les valeurs chrétiennes et l'éducation**, Presses de l'Université Laval, Québec, 1967, p. 191.

(9) **La présence de l'Église en éducation**, Fédération des Collèges classiques, 1966, p. 47. See also P. Angers' article «Confessionnalité ou pastorale dans l'école?» in **Perspectives**, février, 1968, pp. 19-68.

(10) W.R. Inge, quoted by Peter L. Berger in **A Rumor of Angels**, New York, Doubleday, 1969, Penguin Press, 1970, p. 37.

(11) **Ibid.**, p. 30.

(12) **Ibid.**, p. 22

(13) A. Greeley, in **Concilium**, January 1973, p. 1. See also by the same author: **Unsecular Man, The Persistence of Religion**, New York, Schocken Press, 1972. See also: C. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", in **The Religious Situation**, Boston, Beacon Press, 1968; R. Nisbet, **Social Change in History**, New York, Oxford University Press, 1969; V. Caster, «La sécularisation interprétée» in Lumen Vitae, No. 23, 1968.

(14) Commission d'étude sur les laïcs et l'Église, **L'Église au Québec;** *un héritage, un projet, Fides, 1972, p. 193.*

(15) Khalil Gibran, **The Prophet**, New York, Knopf, 1923, p. 56.

(16) Educational Activity, Report of the Superior Council of Education, 1969-1970, Quebec, 1970.

(17) A. Greeley, Unsecular Man, New York, Schocken Press, 1972, p. 66.

(18) **Ibid.**, p. 16.

(19) Faure report, op. cit., pp. 155-156.

(20) **Educational Activity**, op. cit.

(21) Jer. 31: 33-34.

(22) **Educational Activity**, op. cit.

(23) J. Onimus, Réflexions sur l'essentiel, p. 102.

(24) Faure Report, op. cit.

(25) G. Duperray, «Le mouvement catéchétique: où en sommes-nous? où allons-nous?» in **Vérité et Vie**, No 685, p. 15.

(26) **Ibid.**, p. 15.

(27) See «Évaluation du rendement du système d'enseignement» in **Rapport annuel 1970-1971** du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, pp. 277-279.

(28) See: N. Smart, **Secular Education and the Logic of Religion**, Faber, 1968, pp. 15-18.

(29) See the account of Sydney Simon's work and techniques: **Values and Teaching** and **Value Clarification**, Center of Humanistic Studies, Amherst College, Massachusetts.

(30) T.A. Harris, **I'm OK — You're OK**, Harper and Row, 1967.

(31) A. Greeley and P. Rossi, **The Education of Catholic Americans**, Adline, Chicago, 1966.

(32) J. Perret, «Y a-t-il en France des valeurs communes capables d'animer une éducation nationale? in **Vérité et Vie**, No 675, décembre 1973.

(33) See: J. Harvey, «La crise actuelle de la pratique religieuse et la pastorale des marginaux», in Pastorale-Québec, septembre, 1972.

(34) A special issue of **Religious Education**, July-August, 1973 gives a selection of the papers presented at The National Conference on Religious Education in a Pluralistic Society. The conference was held at York University in Toronto during June, 1973.

(35) See: **Rapport de la commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec**, Fides, 1966, troisième partie, pp. 53-92; P. Garant, **La confessionnalité ou la laïcité du système scolaire public québécois**, Les Cahiers du droit, vol. 10, No 4; G. Houle, **Le cadre juridique de l'administration scolaire locale au Québec**, Annexe du rapport de la commission royale d'enquête sur l'enseignement dans la province de Québec, 1966; R. Laflamme, art. cit., pp. 170-212; P. Angers, «Confessionnalité ou pastorale dans l'école?» in **Perspectives**, février, 1968, pp. 19-68. **La présence de l'Église en éducation**, Fédération des Collèges classiques, 1966; Duclercq, Michel, «L'Église dans le monde scolaire» in **Parole et Mission**, No 30, juillet 1965, pp. 433-453.

(36) R. Laflamme, **art. cit.**, p. 209.